

## **Nina Alonso Hathaway**

### **Things: Yard-Sale Karma**

Strangers turn things over  
check sets for missing pieces  
squint at a brass frame  
with the photo torn out

no one wants that black vase  
dusty years on the shelf  
but a girl buys the bracelet  
I can't wear any more

because he gave it to me  
pain leaves silent scars  
scratches no polish can clean  
no magic scare away

spring rain sprinkles  
the green wheelbarrow  
my daughter pushed at four  
time to drag things inside

first those canvas beach chairs  
dismal as the ex that chose them  
but a small blond woman  
points and offers cash

so I smile with queenly calm and say  
'it's a deal' surprised she doesn't  
see stains of bad karma  
which I guess belong only to me.

### **Casbah Guide**

#### **1.**

We follow the guide an earthbound  
shadow with a stiff-knee shuffle and  
pointy yellow shoes stop to snap a photo

with his hand on Fernando's shoulder  
we're fifteen minute Casbah friends  
in a shop selling red carpets then

“That’s the Tangier jail” he says of a fenced  
yard where men in pajamas drag buckets  
“there’s millionaire Hutton’s house”

thick-legged guards by the door where  
frilly pink flowers are hanging from vines  
over a vendor’s smoky brazier

we sit at a sweet tea hippie place with  
rose striped walls and the guide says  
he’s fifty-six though he looks older

deep wrinkles dark sores on his hands  
he flicks a bug off the table then  
admits he married a girl of thirteen

his mother picked for him sighs at  
memories of their first wedded month  
so shy they spent nights talking

but now their grown son’s  
lazy and useless hanging around  
smoking kif.

2.

Up the hill a turbaned man lifts  
a huge cobra for the crowd to see  
the hooded shape rippling  
so close I jump back

my first devil snake sunned itself  
motionless in the grass by a dusty road  
but I’m six years old skipping to my piano  
lesson run away horrified screaming

this Tangier cobra’s likely  
half dead maybe de-venomed  
poison ducts slit wide but I’m  
terrified sinking void center

the black cobra flute keeps  
scraping my mind numb while  
the goatskin drum stutters  
blood rhythms

what a bargain we  
bought for five dirham  
our Casbah guide  
and a death charm.

**Nina Rubinstein Alonso**'s work has appeared in *Ploughshares*, *The New Yorker*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Mom-Egg*, etc. Her book *This Body* was published by David Godine Press, her chapbook *Riot Wake* is upcoming from Cervena Barva Press, and her story collection is in the works.